

**The Impact of U.S. Democracy and Governance Assistance
in Africa:
Benin Case Study**

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Paper Prepared for Presentation at American Political Science Association Meeting
in Boston, Massachusetts, August 29 – September 1, 2002

Abstract

As part of its support for democratic development around the world, especially since the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, the international community has provided a significant amount of assistance for the promotion of democracy. While there is a modest, albeit growing, amount of literature on this issue, there are few independent analyses on a country basis of the effects of specific donor country democracy assistance. This is an issue of increasing importance as the notion of “good governance,” including representative and transparent political systems, has become a central developmental concept. This paper examines what effect, positive or negative, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) support has had on democratic development in Benin, a key country in the development of democracy in Africa. The paper also presents some thoughts on broader issues concerning the efficacy of democracy assistance.

The paper examines USAID efforts to promote democracy in Benin in the rule of law, civil society, elections and political processes, and governance sub-sectors of democracy assistance. The challenge of extrapolating conclusions too broadly from one case study is clear. This paper does conclude, however, that a qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of U.S. democracy/governance assistance to Benin is consonant with other assessments which determine that such assistance can be helpful in supporting indigenous moves towards democratic development and consolidation. A secondary conclusion is that reliance solely on USAID’s evaluation of its own activities is not sufficient to produce a clear picture.

Introduction

As part of its support for democratic development around the world, especially since the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, the international community has provided a significant amount of assistance for the promotion of democracy. While there is a modest, albeit growing, amount of literature on this issue, there are few independent analyses on a country basis of the effects of specific donor country democracy assistance. This is an issue of increasing importance as the notion of “good governance,” including representative and transparent political systems, has become a central developmental concept. This paper examines what effect, positive or negative, U.S. government support has had on democratic development in Benin, a key country in the development of democracy in Africa. The paper also presents some thoughts on broader issues concerning the efficacy of democracy assistance.

There is clearly a wide range of opinion about whether democracy and governance programs have a positive impact. Skeptics assert that there is not. One scholar has concluded that “international pressure and the efforts of a small urban elite were able to initiate democratic transition where authoritarian governments were caught off-guard, but they are insufficient for democratic consolidation. . . . Even if the international community had sufficient commitment and a strong enough attention span, which it does not, the creation of democratic institutions cannot be accomplished from outside. . . . In the meantime, democracy promotion, like structural

adjustment, will be another experiment on relatively powerless Africans by (perhaps well-intentioned) international ‘mad scientists.’”¹

In a more nuanced perspective, Joel Barkan has written that “it is important to note that these (i.e. democracy support) programs are at best programs that operate at the margin of the process—as facilitators of transitions that are driven mainly by the internal dynamics of the societies in which they occur and/or by the internal dynamics of the regimes that govern these societies. . . . While ‘like-minded donors’ can provide useful support to accelerate or consolidate the process, they cannot do so without indigenous democrats.”² Bratton has argued that international pressures are best understood in terms of their interactions with domestic political factors such as the presence in timing of mass protest, in the relative resourcefulness of state and social actors.³ In a similar vein, another observer has suggested that “countries may be justified in mounting efforts to promote democracy abroad, but such projects need to be carried out with care.”⁴

¹ Letitia Lawson, “External Democracy Promotion in Africa: Another False Start?” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 37, no.1 (1999): 23.

² Joel Barkan, “Can Established Democracies Nurture Democracy Abroad? Some Lessons from Africa,” in *Democracy’s Victory and Crisis*, ed. Axel Hadennius (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 395.

³ Michael Bratton, “International Versus Domestic Pressures for Democratization in Africa,” in *After the Cold War: Security and Democracy in Africa and Asia*, ed. William Hale and Eberhard Kienle (New York: Taurus, 1997), 160.

⁴ Michael Pinto-Duchinsky, “The Rise of Political Aid,” in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Regional Challenges*, ed. Larry Diamond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 307.

Diamond takes a more strongly supportive position, arguing that “one of the distinguishing features of the Third Wave of democratization has been the salience of international influences . . . international and especially regional demonstration effects played a crucial role in stimulating and providing models for subsequent democratic transitions. No less influential were a variety of more tangible international pressures and inducements, including the growth of governmental and nongovernmental forms of assistance to democratic actors, and the increasing emphasis on human rights and democracy promotion in the foreign policies of established democracies, especially the United States.”⁵

There have also been many statements and some policies of recent U.S. administrations and democracy provision organizations that mirror this belief. The opening statement on the webpage of the International Republican Institute (IRI), for example, asserts that “by aiding emerging democracies, IRI plays a valuable role in helping bring greater stability to the world.”⁶

It is worthwhile noting here that this perspective has been reflected in increasing levels of U.S. government foreign aid to promote democracy and governance.

[Figure 1 here]

The aim of this paper is to examine where the reality may lie on this rainbow of beliefs, examining in some detail the case of Benin, an African country which is seen by many as having been in the vanguard of democratic change. The challenge of extrapolating conclusions too

⁵ Larry Diamond, “In Search of Consolidation,” in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Regional Challenges*, ed. Larry Diamond, xxxiv.

broadly from one case study is clear. This paper does conclude, however, that a qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of U.S. democracy/governance assistance to Benin is consonant with other assessments which determine that such assistance can be helpful in supporting indigenous moves towards democratic development and consolidation. A secondary conclusion is that reliance solely on USAID's evaluation of its own activities is not sufficient to produce a clear picture.

Methodology

In seeking to answer the question of what the relationship of U.S. democracy assistance is to democratic development in a particular country, the main challenge is methodological in nature. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to develop a precise, scientifically correct response because of the wide range of variables involved. The development of democratic institutions is a subtle process, and subject to such factors as historical, regional, social, and economic contexts, acts of god, personality and leadership attributes, in addition to international assistance.

One simple way to approach this issue would be to look at what countries have been major recipients of democracy/governance assistance in the past decade, and to determine whether there is a correlation between the amount of this assistance and overall level of democratic development. Even if there were to be a positive correlation, it is very difficult to identify and prove a causal relationship. Figures 2 and 3, for example, show three entirely

⁶ See International Republican Institute website at <<http://www.iri.org>> (25 July 2002).

different results. They represent both U.S. democracy assistance for three countries in West Africa and each country's averaged political rights and civil liberties Freedom House ratings for the 1997-2001 time periods. They show that in one case, there was a positive relationship, in a second an inverse relationship, and in the third no change in the ratings despite increased aid levels.

[Figures 2 and 3 here]

A key challenge regards the question of disaggregation, both from other donors' programs and from the continent-wide to the country level. One answer is that this could be facilitated by the continued development and adaptation of analytic tools such as the *Nations in Transit* project that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has funded in eastern and central Europe. This project examines one aspect of democratic development—the role of civil society—in detail on a national level. Through the compilation of expert analyses using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a picture is determined of the role that civil society is playing in promoting democracy in countries throughout the region.⁷ Due largely to the level of resources required to undertake this approach, however, it does not yet exist in Africa.

The remaining methodological approach is that of the case study—examining in detail what has transpired in one country, and making the most responsible judgements possible about what information developed means, and what can be applied more widely. USAID has begun

⁷ See Freedom House, *Nations in Transit* website at <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nattransit.htm>> (25 July 2002).

this recently by preparing analytic reports on the effectiveness of USAID democracy assistance in Bolivia, South Africa, and Bulgaria.⁸ These reports contain much useful information and perspective. For example, they identify probable areas in which USAID democracy assistance has been helpful. These include promoting civil society development, independent media, local government, and electoral processes.

A major weakness of these reports, however, is that they were prepared on an in-house basis by a contractor with long-standing ties to USAID. They relied, to a significant extent, on information provided through USAID, so the possibility of a conflict of interest is present. The information should be cross-referenced or verified to the extent possible through interviews and analysis of secondary sources. Also, at points, the reports make assertions of causal linkages without providing substantiation. Thus, the veracity and independence of the conclusions developed can be subject to question. Finally, these reports are of limited validity for broader analytic purposes as they are limited in number and cannot, by themselves, be expected to include definitive analyses of what lessons may be learned about the effectiveness of democracy and governance programming in a broader, cross-national context.

In theory, individual USAID mission-produced annual Results Review and Resource Request (R4) reports should be a rich source of material for evaluative purposes. The credibility of the evaluative section of these reports is compromised, however, by the fact that they also

⁸ See three reports prepared by Management Systems International for USAID and issued in May/June 2001: *The Transition to Sustainable Democracy in South Africa and the Strategic Role of USAID*; *The Transition to Sustainable Democracy in Bolivia and the Strategic Role of*

serve as budget requests for future programming. The information contained in them must be considered with care and even, in some cases, skepticism. This paper includes only a limited amount of information from this source.

Other independent, country-specific case study analyses of democracy assistance and its impact on democratization exist, although they are limited in number.⁹ These studies tended to fall in the middle of the “assistance is helpful/not helpful” divide, suggesting that the assistance has had some positive effect on some sectoral aspects of democratic development, but that it has not proved to be a primary or central factor in explaining a nation’s path towards democratic consolidation.

This paper seeks to add to this information base. As additional literature is developed, which should provide some common analytic points of reference, it will be increasingly possible to develop broader conclusions about the impact of democracy assistance, although country and regional specific contextual variables will need to be taken into account. A highly quantifiable approach has difficulty capturing these. In addition, such approaches do not capture subjective improvements, such as the fact that the passage of one or two particular pieces of legislation by a parliament may be more important than another parliament’s passage of ten times as many laws.

USAID; and *The Transition to Sustainable Democracy in Bulgaria and the Strategic Role of USAID*.

⁹ Two very thoughtful case studies are Thomas Carothers, *Assessing Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996); and Sarah Mendelson, “Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Russia: Between Success and Failure,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 68-106. Also see Peter Burnell, ed. *Democracy Assistance: International Cooperation for Democratization* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

In fact, it has been argued that USAID's definitions of progress has some flaws, and could usefully be reviewed. For example, they reflect a bias towards quantifiable benchmarks rather than the admittedly more elusive qualitative, behavioral change aspects of the development of a democratic political system.¹⁰

This paper therefore uses the case study approach to provide an independent assessment of the impact of U.S. democracy assistance to the country of Benin. Why this country choice? Benin has a clear track record of experimenting with democratic institutions since 1989, and has received a significant level of U.S. democracy assistance, in relative terms. It represents a manageable case, given the country's size and the amount of existing relevant information. Examination of this case also provides some suggestions of how the effect of U.S. democracy assistance can have broader implications.

U.S. Democracy Assistance

Donor agencies may differ somewhat in their definition of democracy assistance, and some may direct their resources towards one or two sub-categories. The model developed by USAID covers many of the themes addressed by donors. It is divided into four main sub-categories. These areas of focus include rule of law, civil society, elections and political processes, and governance.

The rule of law area addresses both constitutional and actual guarantees of basic human rights and basic principles of equal treatment of all people before the law. In many states with weak or nascent democratic traditions, existing laws are not equitable or equitably applied, judicial independence is compromised, individual and minority rights are not truly guaranteed, and institutions have not yet developed the capacity to administer existing laws. Three interconnected key sub-areas include supporting legal reform, improving the administration of justice, and increasing citizens' access to justice.

Since this paper is focused on assessing the impact of assistance programming, it is useful to highlight how USAID itself has defined how progress can be identified. In USAID's *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators*, rule of law activities are deemed to have been successful if they have resulted in strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights. This general notion is disaggregated into the following sub-categories: foundations for protection of human rights and gender equity conform to international standards; laws, regulations, and policies promote a market-based economy; equal access to justice; and effective and fair legal sector institutions.¹¹

Civil society has been defined as the “associational realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or

¹⁰ See Edward R. McMahon, “Assessing USAID's Assistance for Democratic Development: Is it Quantity Versus Quality?” *Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2001).

values.”¹² A wide variety of groups, including women’s rights organizations, business and labor federations, media groups, coalitions of professional associations, civic education groups, bar associations, environmental activist groups, and human rights monitoring organizations receive assistance from USAID in this domain. The role of civil society in promoting greater political pluralism has been largely championed in democracy-related literature as a central element in the recent, “Third Wave” expansion of democracy around the world, although there have been an increasing number of critiques of civil society’s impact, questioning, for example, the extent of partisanship, commitment, funding, and quality of organizations that make up civil society.¹³

In evaluating the impact of civil society programming, USAID looks at the “increased development of a politically active civil society.” This includes a legal framework to protect and promote civil society, increased citizen participation in the policy process and oversight of public institutions, increased institutional and financial viability of civil society organizations, an enhanced free flow of information, and a strengthened democratic political culture.¹⁴

There are a whole series of challenges that complicate the ability of nascent democracies to implement legitimate electoral processes. These can include inefficient or poorly organized election administration, insufficient education on the part of citizens about different stages of the

¹¹ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators* (Washington, DC: Management Systems International, 1998), 17.

¹² Gordon White, “Civil Society, Democratization and Development (I): Clearing the Analytic Ground,” *Democratization* 1, no.3 (Autumn 1994): 379.

¹³ See Michael Clough, “Reflections on Civil Society” and David Rieff, “The False Dawn of Civil Society,” *The Nation* 268, no. 7 (February 1999).

political process, including elections; and a lack of effectively structured political parties.

USAID programs to address these problems have included election planning and implementation, political party development, voter education, and support for domestic and international monitoring groups.

USAID's criteria for program effectiveness in this sub-sector are centered on the theme of "more genuine and competitive political processes." More specific issues include the development of impartial electoral frameworks, credible election administrations, an informed and active citizenry, effective oversight of the electoral process, a representative and competitive multiparty system, inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups, and effective transfer of political power.¹⁵

The concept of governance applies to a basket of issues dealing with the functioning of democratic institutions. These include anti-corruption activities, decentralization, civil-military relations, and legislative and local government functioning. USAID's programming in this sub-sector is designed to encourage and assist nascent democratic governments to integrate key principles such as transparency, accountability, and participation as they develop, and to improve their institutions and processes.

USAID defines progress in governance activities as resulting in "more transparent and accountable government institutions." This is achieved by increased government responsiveness

¹⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators*, 117.

¹⁵ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators*, 59.

to citizens at the local level, heightened access by citizens to improved government information, strengthening of government ethical practices, improved civil-military relations supportive of democracy, more effective, independent, and representative legislatures, and more effective policy processes in the executive branch.¹⁶

Obviously, it is not realistic to expect that in a country study all of these categories would be shown to reflect across-the-board improvements as a result of U.S. assistance.

Benin Political Overview

Benin has stood at the forefront of democratization processes in Africa, by virtue of its 1989-1990 National Conference in which then dictator Mathieu Kérékou was forced to cede power, and by its subsequent steps towards consolidating democratic institutions. The 1991 presidential election victory by a former World Bank official, Nicephore Soglo, over Kérékou, sent shock waves across the continent as electoral defeats of incumbent African presidents were almost without precedent.

As a key democratic development observer and practitioner of democracy in the region has noted, “In the ten years since then, Benin has created new institutions—including a highly respected Constitutional Court and an autonomous Election Commission—to strengthen the

¹⁶ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators*, 153.

foundations of democratic governance.”¹⁷ To date, most of the major democratic institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Superior Audiovisual and Communication Authority are established and are relatively well respected by the executive branch.

During the 1990s three legitimate legislative elections took place, with alternance in power taking place. President Kérékou defeated Soglo in the 1996 presidential elections, the country’s second legitimate presidential election. “The reputation of Benin’s Election Commission and Constitutional Court grew, and the perception that democracy was taking root in Benin became widespread.”¹⁸

A strong civil society has played an important role over the past decade in articulating concerns on various policy-related issues and serving, at times, as a watchdog on executive branch power. The legislature has also demonstrated independence, at times rejecting proposed budgets and other executive branch initiatives.

Benin’s democratic transition has been far from smooth, however. A serious challenge to Benin’s reputation as a country en route to democratic consolidation occurred in 2001, when President Kérékou’s re-election victory was tarnished by opposition claims of fraud. Important institutional reform initiatives, such as decentralization, have languished. The results of economic growth, and the promise that democratization could lead to more jobs and higher incomes, have been ambiguous. According to the World Bank, sustained economic policy

¹⁷ Christopher Fomunyoh, “Democratization in Fits and Starts,” *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 3 (July 2001): 36.

reforms and political stability have enabled Benin to achieve a 4.9% average annual economic growth in the period from 1991 to 2001. Despite this period of positive per capita income growth (per capita GNP of US\$380 in 2001), however, poverty has not been reduced significantly.¹⁹

Assistance Results in Benin

The USAID mission in Benin states that its democracy assistance programs in Benin over the past several years have been “limited to those that will increase participation of civil society in decision-making, strengthen mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability in government, improve the environment for decentralized private and local initiatives, and reinforce the effectiveness and independence of the legislature.”²⁰ Some of the specific types of issues to be assessed include nongovernmental organization (NGO) development, election monitoring, election administration and reform, anti-corruption efforts, parliamentary activities, and judicial oversight.

Since 1996 USAID/Benin’s Democracy and Governance programming has also maintained a “cross-cutting” emphasis in supporting both the basic education and family health sectors. In its strategy, the Mission has emphasized the critical cross-cutting role that it has played to remove constraints to good governance in education and health to foster local and

¹⁸ Fomunyoh, “Democratization in Fits and Starts,” 36.

¹⁹ The World Bank Group, “Benin,” *Country Brief*, April 2002, <<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/bj2.htm>> (25 July 2002).

²⁰ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Democracy and Governance*, <<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/index.html>> (25 July 2002).

national development. In addition, decentralization is essential. For this reason, building on its cross-cutting nature, it has simultaneously targeted actions at the national level (decision-makers) and the local level (grassroots), and linked democracy and governance activities to economic growth activities.

Given country realities, resource limitations, and programming priorities, USAID cannot and should not focus equally on every democracy and governance sub-sector. In view of these constraints, to what extent has U.S. government democracy/governance assistance contributed to Benin's democratic development? Table 1 shows a partial list of democratic development programs funded by the U.S. government in recent years.

[Table 1 here]

The USAID mission in Benin views its work as having had a significant impact. Its web page (<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/success.html>) contains descriptions of what it believes to have been the recent results of its democracy/governance activities. The following assessment discusses the impact of USAID democracy programming by sub-sector.

a) Rule of Law

In terms of the macro-level functioning of democratic institutions, a key player in the rule of law sector is the Constitutional Court, which was established in order to interpret the Constitution and serve as an arbiter of disputes between the executive and legislative branches. The Court consists of seven members, nominated by the national assembly, and appointed by the President. There have been a number of important test cases that have provided a demonstration of the independence of the Constitutional Court. These have included an attempt by then-

President Soglo to appoint a new president of the Supreme Court in 1993, a Ministry of the Interior decision to limit the number of legal local development associations which was challenged by the National Assembly, and constitutional conflict between the National Assembly and the government over budget authority. In each of these, the Constitutional Court ruled against the executive branch.²¹ In a highly symbolic gesture, the Constitutional Court also ordered President Kérékou to retake the oath of office in 1996 after he had deliberately altered the oath of office. Such actions have shown that the Constitutional Court was making its mark as an independent institution.

Another assessment of the functioning of the Constitutional Court determined that “the Constitutional Court had, in its five years of existence, issued over 150 decisions concerning human rights, either as direct claims by individual victims, or as constitutional review of laws violating human rights. The court is widely regarded, therefore, as the most effective body for the protection of human rights in Benin, including by the CBDH (Benin Human Rights Commission).²²

Regarding USAID’s own criteria for effectiveness in this subsector—protection of human rights and gender equity to conform to international standards; laws, regulations, and policies to promote a market-based economy; equal access to justice; and effective and fair legal sector

²¹ For more detail see Bruce Magnusson, “Testing Democracy in Benin: Experiments in Institutional Reform,” in *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Richard Joseph (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

²² Human Rights Watch, “Benin,” *Protectors or Pretenders: Government Human Rights Commissions in Africa*, <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/africa/benin/benin5.html>> (25 July 2002).

institutions—USAID has done relatively little in Benin. This reflects more a simple lack of emphasis in this sub-sector than the failure of programming. Its role in supporting the Constitutional Court appears, for example, to have been very modest. It is difficult to point to clear and verifiable examples of support that has promoted the independence and effectiveness of the Constitutional Court.

b) Civil Society

In Benin, civil society has played an important and largely positive role in promoting democratic change and has the potential to continue to do so. The cumulative effect played by constituent elements of civil society including, but not limited to, human right groups, advocacy organizations, journalists, and lawyers' associations, trade unions, and other watchdog groups has been apparent.²³ This is similar to democratic transitions in other parts of the world, especially Eastern Europe and Asia. At times, problems with accountability and alleged partisanship have occurred, but the balance sheet in general has been very positive.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that USAID's contribution to strengthening the NGO sector has been significant. Much has been done to meet USAID's criteria of developing a legal framework to protect and promote civil society, increasing citizen participation in the policy process and oversight of public institutions, increasing institutional and financial viability of civil society organizations, and enhancing a free flow of information.

²³ See, for example, "Benin Country Report," *Freedom in the World: Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (New York: Freedom House, 2002), 105-107.

With USAID support beginning in 1994, a U.S. organization, AFRICARE, worked to strengthen Benin's NGOs by offering training in internal management (program development, proposal writing, fund raising, financial management) as well as in the larger principles of diversity, transparency, and accountability to the community and to the country. In 1997, USAID's budget request for 1997 stated that "in 1991, twelve NGOs were involved in civic affairs. The number of NGOs providing services related to civic affairs has grown to 29." The total number of registered NGOs had risen from 273 (prior to 1991) to 1300 (year 2000); active NGOs in Civic Affairs from 12 (prior to 1991) to 80 (year 2000); active NGOs elections management from 0 (prior to 1991) to 30 (1999).²⁴

This quantitative approach does not, of course, assess the effectiveness of the organizations, or what impact they have had in civic affairs and governance. Perhaps for this reason the current USAID/Benin website states that USAID's programming "has succeeded in raising the management performance of all 55 NGOs who received assistance under the BINGOS (Benin Indigenous NGO Strengthening) activity that ended in December 2000. All 55 NGOs met the standard for transparency and accountability."²⁵ It cited the example of "Jeunesse Ambition," a BINGOS graduate NGO, "which led a successful advocacy campaign convincing the municipal government of Porto-Novo to designate a public waste-disposal site for private

²⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development, "Benin," *Congressional Presentation FY 1997*, <<http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cp97/countries/bj.htm>> (25 July 2002).

²⁵ U.S. Agency for International Development, Democracy and Governance Successes Summary, <<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/s-summary.html>> (6 August 2002).

trash collection. This is a demonstration of the skills acquired under the BINGOS advocacy training.”²⁶

One independent study of the legal and regulatory environment for NGOs indicated that almost half of them were functioning at a level that could influence decision-making at the national level. USAID’s analysis of this information was that “this success can be attributed to the code of ethics adopted by NGOs with support from USAID and other donors.”²⁷

USAID has provided support to NGOs for specific activities such as election observation and advocacy. This is one of the key areas in which USAID’s focus on “cross-cutting” development initiatives which result in support for more than one developmental area of priority can occur through a given project activity. One such example was the support for a 1998 seminar on election administration reform by an NGO, the Circle of Inter-Dependents (CID). The seminar resulted in a list of recommendations being submitted to the National Assembly including the codification of the method of selecting members of the electoral commission and provisions for the creation of a permanent secretariat.²⁸

Another example of successful impact is that of the role of civil society in anti-corruption efforts. According to USAID, the Front Des Organizations Nationales Anti-Corruption

²⁶ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Benin Indigenous Non-governmental Organizations Strengthening (BINGOS)*, < <http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/s-bingos.html>> (6 August 2002).

²⁷ U.S. Agency for International Development, *2001 Benin Results Review and Resource Request*, (Washington, DC: USAID, 1999), 21.

²⁸ Management Systems International, *Election Case Studies—Benin* (Washington, DC: Management Systems International, 1999), 13.

(FONAC), a local alliance of NGOs supported by USAID/Benin, has actively campaigned to raise public awareness of corruption. Custom agents, teachers, medical staff, and representatives of unions of education, health, and finance sectors were convened to various workshops on ethical behavior in their respective sectors. Presentations focused on the negative impact of corruption and how it directly affects the workplace and the economy. The public discussion engendered by these programs has reflected popular will that government managers and leaders lead by example by sanctioning and enacting legislation and/or regulations that will protect whistle-blowers. FONAC leadership has pledged to act as a pressure group on the National Assembly to take legislative action to deal with these problems.²⁹

c) Electoral Processes and Political Parties

The conduct of electoral processes in Benin has both highly positive and negative aspects. Two presidential elections have been credible, and have resulted in governments with popular legitimacy. Some positive institutional changes have occurred, for example, regarding the independence of election authorities. The most recent election of 2001, however, had serious structural, financial, and administrative problems. “The opposition banded together to challenge President Kérékou’s early and substantial lead in the first round of the March 4 elections. The challengers accused Kérékou of vote-rigging and, pointing to the disparity between the Election Commission’s returns and those of the Constitutional Court, called into question the

²⁹ U.S. Agency for International Development, Benin Mission, *Democracy and Governance Success Stories: FONAC* <<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/s-fonac.html>> (6 August 2002).

Commission's competence and neutrality."³⁰ This resulted in the main challenger, former President Nicephore Soglo, boycotting the second round and Kérékou easily winning reelection.

USAID's criteria for program effectiveness in the sub-sector are centered on the theme of "more genuine and competitive political processes." More specific issues include the development of impartial electoral frameworks, credible election administrations, an informed and active citizenry, and effective oversight of the electoral process.

USAID has, since 1990, provided considerable support for electoral processes in Benin. Between 1991 and 1995, USAID provided support for six separate election-related activities. Since 1995, USAID has placed considerable emphasis on efforts to support Benin's electoral administration. This assistance has included technical assistance for the drafting and revision of electoral laws, provision of electoral materials such as ballot box seals and indelible ink (to mark those who have voted), training of both party and nonpartisan pollworkers and pollwatchers, and support to civic education organizations for voter education.

Benin was singled out in this regard in USAID's FY 2000 Annual Performance Report. "USAID's support to civil society organizations in Benin helped introduce key electoral reforms, including helping amend the electoral code and helping the autonomous national electoral

³⁰ Fomunyoh, "Democratization in Fits and Starts," 37-38.

commission gain permanent status. These efforts helped reduce electoral fraud, contributing significantly to the successful legislative elections in 1999.”³¹

It is true that USAID-supported civil society and election programming played a key role in the National Assembly revision of the electoral code to redefine the role of the Permanent Secretariat of the Electoral Commission to make it operational and apolitical, and in the adoption of a single ballot system.³² It is not possible, however, to disaggregate the exact extent to which its support contributed to these reforms. This author, for example, was told by two senior officials in the Ministry of Interior, Security, and Territorial Administration that they had been opponents of giving up jurisdiction over election administration until they observed South African elections and saw the positive role that the Independent Electoral Commission played there. Their mission had been financed by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, a congressionally funded organization, rather than USAID.

In preparation for the March 2001 presidential elections, USAID supported training to the Autonomous National Election Commission (CENA), its Permanent Administrative Secretariat, and other electoral personnel such as poll workers and voter registration staff on census and polling procedures; organized roundtables on election issues; and trained NGO and political party observers on election monitoring. In addition, USAID financed local NGOs to conduct

³¹ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Performance Report* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2002), 25.

³² U.S. Agency for International Development, *2002 Benin Results Review and Resource Request* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2000), 19.

civic education campaigns on election fraud, buying of votes, and organized presidential debates during the campaign, and work toward computerization of the national voter registry.

In March 2001, USAID, in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), organized four regional fora with NGOs to review issues at stake and the role of candidates in making sure that civil society's needs are taken into account. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) conducted a "training of trainers" workshop for political party poll-watchers. Four local NGOs were selected to implement a series of activities, including coordination of election monitoring by NGOs, voter education campaign to incite the political parties to base the campaign on candidates programs (issues), raising awareness on the risk of violence during elections, advocating for tolerance for competitors, and encouraging women's participation by focusing on the secrecy of the vote and advantages of the single ballot. This program enabled political parties that are supporting presidential candidates to monitor the registration process and deploy trained observers to the 7,000 polling stations that were created.

To control electoral campaign spending, USAID assisted the Chamber of Accounts of the Supreme Court to organize a workshop for political party leaders on campaign finances. A handbook produced for the 1999 legislative elections was reprinted for distribution to political party officials. U.S. mission observation teams also monitored elections.

Approximately one month after the 2001 presidential election, USAID supported a meeting of its civil society partners designed to evaluate the election. A number of important findings and recommendations were presented regarding the civil society and the press; governance institutions; the political parties, and the role of the donor community. The common

conclusion of the participants was that the election lacked legitimacy given the manner in which it was organized and the fashion in which difficult issues were handled.³³

Problems with the electoral register have been at the center of much of the election-related controversies during Benin's democratic experiment. According to USAID, the computerization of a permanent voter's list in Benin (LEPI in French) has been the linchpin of a common effort involving USAID, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Danish aid agency DANIDA. In 1998, under the initiative of USAID, experts recruited by both USAID and UNDP conducted a feasibility study. In 2000, the three partners funded a study on the operationalization of a LEPI in Benin. Members of the Beninese government, the National Assembly, political parties, and civil society have been involved in this project. The effort was organized by two local NGOs funded by USAID and DANIDA under the sponsorship of both the National Assembly President and a senior minister, Bruno Amoussou.³⁴ The key findings and recommendations of the experts were supposed to have been delivered in 2001.

Given all of these efforts, the 2001 presidential election debacle surely provided unwelcome news to USAID. Despite all of the assistance that it and other donors had provided to support the process, it was widely seen as having failed to produce a president with a clear mantle of legitimacy. As much effort and funding that USAID poured into Benin's election-related efforts, it did not keep Benin from suffering a serious crisis surrounding the 2001

³³ U.S. Agency for International Development, Benin Mission, *Democracy and Governance Success Stories: Election Assessment*, <<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/s-electionassess.html>> (6 August 2002).

elections. USAID has attempted to place the best face on this situation by claiming in reference to its election training that “a recent USAID study has concluded that NGOs trained under this activity contributed to the conduct of ‘peaceful and tolerant’ presidential elections in 2001.”³⁵

Others may argue that without the USAID assistance, the crisis could have been worse, although such a contention is very difficult to validate. It is important to maintain perspective and note that, overall, despite the 2001 problems, Benin does maintain the spirit as well as the form of an electoral democracy.

The record of *political party functioning* is highly checkered. In this post-ideological age, it is difficult to identify organizing principles for parties that are not based on a particular political figure or on ethnic or regional characteristics. In addition, many parties remain heavily top-down in leadership style, and are weak on internal democratic, participatory processes. The eternal problems of lack of resources and organizational expertise especially bedevil opposition parties.

What role has USAID played regarding political party development? There is some overlap with election-related activities, since they have included party poll-watcher training and candidate and issue development. Other activities have taken place outside the election cycle and have been designed to address more general party-building issues, such as internal party

³⁴ USAID, Benin Mission, *Democracy and Governance Success Stories: Election Assessment*.

³⁵ U.S. Agency for International Development, *2004 Benin Results Review and Resource Request*, (Washington, DC: USAID, 2002), 19.

structures, grassroots participation and internal democratic functioning, public opinion, and platform and message design.³⁶

Has USAID succeeded in its own yardstick measure in helping to foster “a representative and competitive multiparty system?” The National Democratic Institute has had the most direct involvement with political parties, conducting several separate political party training programs. While each may have had some utility, their cumulative effectiveness has been minimized by their scattershot and episodic nature. This has often been due more to the availability of funding rather than any substantive decision about the maximum length of a program. One program, in 1994, for example, was designed to strengthen internal party structures. It consisted of a series of three seminars for political parties. Topics addressed included key elements of successful party planning and organization, particularly in the context of election organizing, message development, and participation of grassroots activists in political parties and election-day activities. It is difficult to identify at this point what positive lasting impact it has had. One evaluation, in 1996, stated that “the program was successfully completed” but that “some of the participants complained that a few of the suggestions did not take into account the considerations of Beninese political situation such as illiteracy, the fact that voters do not vote for a program or party but for an individual, and the fact that parties are generally supported financially by one person.”³⁷

³⁶ The German Konrad Adenauer political party foundation has also engaged in programming designed to support development of Benin’s political parties.

³⁷ African-American Institute, *Africa Regional Electoral Assistance Fund: A Final Report*, (Washington, DC: AAI, 1996), 15.

Another 1996 evaluation of the NDI program based on interviews with Beninese participants found a disconnect between the admirable principle of the political party programming and the realities on the ground. The report cited a “party official in Benin who attended NDI seminars said he tried to adapt campaign techniques learned there, especially regarding the media, but that he lacked the resources to do so.”³⁸

Neither of these evaluations had anything to say about how the programming may have impacted the functioning of Beninese political parties in a broader, or longer-term context. To judge by their structures and conduct, political parties in Benin do not appear to be demonstrably more cohesive and well-organized as compared to seven years ago.

d) Governance

The functioning of national *parliamentary and decentralized bodies* such as municipal or local assemblies is also potentially an important part of the democratization equation. In general, the National Assembly in Benin exercises less power than the executive branch, although it, along with other bodies such as the constitutional courts and the audio-visual council, has been making some inroads into executive predominance. Similarly, Benin has made slow progress in implementing decentralization reforms.

USAID defines progress in governance activities as resulting in “more transparent and accountable government institutions.” This is achieved by increased government responsiveness

³⁸ Thomas R. Lansner and Mikaela McDermott, “Looking to the Future: Evaluating AREAF Program Activity,” unpublished paper prepared for National Democratic Institute (1996).

to citizens at the local level, heightened access by citizens to improved government information, a strengthening of government ethical practices, more effective, independent, and representative legislatures, and more effective policy processes in the executive branch. Based on USAID's governance evaluation criteria, modest progress has been made in some areas.

- (i) ***Parliamentary Activities.*** The Benin Legislative Project implemented by the State University of New York (SUNY) provided technical assistance to the National Assembly beginning in March 2000. The project was designed to “increase the legislative and deliberative capacities of the Benin National Assembly members; reinforce the research, management, and financial capacity of National Assembly support staff; and to improve collaboration between National Assembly members and their constituents.”³⁹

During the first year, a comprehensive staff development program was developed and a training plan was designed for the National Assembly. A workshop to design a Legislative Unit on Research and Bill Drafting was held with the National Assembly. Emphasis was also placed on improving legislative constituent relations. A number of public meetings were organized between deputies and their constituents on key social and developmental themes. One meeting, for example, was on the topic of child trafficking. Victims of child trafficking, traffickers, parents, social activists, as well as the local population expressed their concerns and ways to prevent this practice. Given the sensitivity of the subject and the urgency to act in order to arrest this phenomenon, the

³⁹ U.S. Agency for International Development, Benin Mission, *Democracy and Governance: Programs*, <<http://www.usaid.gov/bj/democracy/programs.html>> (6 August 2002).

participating National Assembly members agreed to draft a much tougher law, although it is not clear if this has occurred.

In June 2001, a workshop was attended by all members of the National Assembly Finance Commission. National Assembly members and Commission staff were briefed by tax and fiscal specialists on how to analyze the national budget in terms of its impact on poverty reduction. The role of the Parliament in shaping the budget as well as developing research and analytic tools to assess the impact of legislative actions were also discussed. Subsequent to the project, funding was included in the national budget for such activities.

This legislative support project was hampered by modest support for it among the National Assembly's leadership, as well as some organizational and internal communication difficulties within the project. These factors contributed to its modest level of achievement.

- (ii) ***Executive Branch Oversight and Audit.*** Corruption remains a considerable problem. The Soglo administration vowed to deal with the “grave-diggers of the national economy. But in six years (1990-1996), only one foreign scapegoat was captured, tried, and jailed as a result of what appears as a tacit agreement among national embezzlers to deceive public opinion and make sure they got away with it.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Noel Dossou-Yovo, “The Experience of Benin,” *International Journal on World Peace* 16, no. 3 (Sept 1999): 59.

USAID's activities in this regard are cross-cutting (note, for example, the previously cited support for FONAC in the civil society promotion sub-sector). With USAID support, the Office of the Inspector General of Finance (IGF) completed a standardized audit manual for public audit institutions. The manual was drafted in collaboration with the Chamber of Accounts (the independent auditing branch of the Supreme Court) and other audit firms. In addition, with USAID support, the IGF organized a training workshop for public accountants and controllers on financial management and auditing standards.

USAID claims that its efforts have led to the hiring of additional auditors, and that “performance of fifty-three audits by the supreme audit institution is building pressure for public accountability and reflects increased strength of transparency and accounting mechanisms.”⁴¹ Additional research would be needed to substantiate these claims.

The IGF has had some direct successes in the fight against corruption. It led a national anti-corruption committee (government and civil society representatives) for the drafting of a national anti-corruption strategy. Furthermore, under the leadership of the IGF, an unannounced investigation was conducted in 2001 at the national port to track down corrupt customs agents. Many agents were found to be engaging in corrupt activities. In fact, a U.N. Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention project paper on corruption in Benin does not specifically cite USAID's activities, but it does note that

⁴¹ U.S. Agency for International Development, *2001 Benin Results Review and Resource Request*, 18.

increasingly, cases of corruption are being identified and publicized, and that especially since 1990, “a genuine coalition has been formed between the executive, the judiciary, and civil society to react against corruption.” The paper also noted that recently a unit has been set up within the executive branch to fight corruption, and it has had some success, “notably within the customs administration.”⁴²

(iii) ***Decentralization.*** As in many countries, the process of decentralization has proven more complicated than may have been initially anticipated. It denotes the devolution of power from the central state to local authorities, and thus many vested interests have come into play. After considerable delay, a number of laws relating to decentralization were passed in 1999 and 2000. They include legislation regarding organizing the territorial administration, establishing communes, setting the financial regulations for the communes of the Republic of Benin, and defining electoral regulations for communes and municipalities in the Republic of Benin. Other than the organization of some workshops, USAID has had little direct contribution to this formal process of decentralization, although other activities such as the promotion of locally-oriented NGOs have contributed indirectly to this.

(iv) ***Donor Coordination.*** Although donor coordination does not fold neatly into the categories cited above and is more of a process issue than substantive, without it program

⁴² United Nations, Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *Elaboration on an Anti-corruption Strategy in Benin*, <http://www.odccp.org/adhoc/crime/corruption_benin_english_5.pdf> (6 August 2002).

effectiveness can be severely limited. Other donors have also been active in Benin.

USAID's 2003 budget justification stated that in 2000, the United States was ranked first among bilateral donors in terms of annual development expenditures, while Denmark, which focuses on agriculture, road construction, judicial reform, and private sector development, was the largest in terms of annual financial obligations. Other bilateral donors and their principal areas of focus are: France (secondary and higher education, agriculture), Germany (hydraulic and rural water, forestry, bridge construction, government decentralization, and national park management), Canada (administrative reform and micro-enterprise development), Switzerland (health, adult literacy, rural development, artisan development, institutional/structural reform), Netherlands (community development, women in development, infrastructure), Japan (judicial reform, food support, agriculture promotion), and Belgium (health, rural development, education, sanitation and water).

The principal multilateral donors and development financiers include the United Nations agencies, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union, African Development Bank, and the West African Development Bank. The European Union provides budget support in health and project financing in transport, judicial reform, and government decentralization. The World Bank supports the promotion of girls' education, construction of primary schools, judicial reform, private sector development, HIV/AIDS prevention, and budget reform.

There has been considerable donor coordination. An analysis of the efficacy of donor interaction has noted that through a multi-donor Participatory Democracy and Good Governance (PDGG) initiative, a 1997 study was produced which enabled donors to determine their particular democratic development funding priorities in a coordinated fashion.⁴³

Conclusions

In general, Benin is a country which, to date, has undergone a relatively positive democratic transition process. Its nascent democratic institutions have functioned with some effectiveness. These include: an active press; a vibrant civil society; courts, including supreme or constitutional courts; a legislature that has demonstrated some assertiveness; and the institutional foundation for an independent election authority. However, serious problems exist in consolidating democracy. These include: contentious/contested electoral processes; corruption; poorly performing political parties; and serious ethnic and regional tensions that threaten the development of a democratic political culture. Governance institutions and political parties present particular challenges.

What conclusions can we draw regarding how much USAID's democracy programming has assisted Benin's democratic development? First, no information has been developed in researching this article which would suggest that USAID's efforts have distorted or impeded

⁴³ Management Systems International, *Election Case Studies—Benin*, 11-13.

Benin's democratic development in any significant fashion. Beyond this, it appears that some assistance has been useful, while other elements have not resulted in much impact, negative or positive. Causal relationship can definitely either be demonstrated or at least inferred in certain situations, such as in the civil society sector. In other cases claims of impact made by USAID may be valid, but would require additional verification.

As is to be expected, USAID's emphasis and impact has not been equal among the sub-sectors. Rule of law activities have received little programmatic emphasis, so there is not much of a track record to assess. By contrast, there has been some substantial impact from civil society assistance, especially regarding increased citizen participation in the policy process and oversight of public institutions, and their increased institutional and financial viability of civil society organizations.

Regarding elections, the greatest success has been in supporting the development of an election observation infrastructure that has developed a fairly sophisticated understanding of electoral practices and analytic ability to determine deficiencies in them. This has had the effect of validating specific claims of electoral fraud and mismanagement while empowering Beninese parties and NGOs to make overall endorsements of legitimacy for national elections, except for the 2001 presidential polls. Assistance has been less successful in strengthening electoral administration, as evidenced by the 2001 presidential election.

There has been some positive political party impact as far election observation goes. Other aspects of political party development (grassroots recruitment, internal party structures,

platform, and message development), however, do not reflect much improvement. There appears to be little evidence that parties are much more coherent entities than they were eight years ago.

Concerning governance, there have been some modest improvements in the legislature and audit sectors.

Two non-sectoral issues merit positive emphasis, both of which are often cited as “motherhood and apple pie” type of aspects of development assistance, but which really have made a difference. First, donor coordination has proven to be an effective and important factor. Sub-sectoral duplication of effort appears to have been avoided, and joint analytic efforts, such as through the PDGG process, have served to improve donor understanding of Beninese political dynamics and needs. Second, in recent years improved understanding of the utility of a “cross-cutting” programmatic approach has earned dividends in increasing USAID’s cost-effectiveness.

Interviews with Beninese democracy promoters suggest that there is another tangible benefit of democracy assistance: that it boosts the morale and commitment of people on the ground. This has been noted in other assessments of democracy programming. For example, in Carothers’ study of assistance to Romania, he states that Romanians “highlighted the psychological, moral, and emotional effects of assistance.”⁴⁴ This benefit may dissipate with time and extended exposure to democracy assistance efforts, but at least in the initial stages of the democratic development and consolidation process, its value appears to be real, if difficult to quantify.

⁴⁴ Carothers, *Assessing Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania*, 95.

Research for this paper has also shown that USAID's own claims of success must be taken with a grain of salt. While they may be well-intentioned and honest attempts to convey the flavor of programmatic impact, they suffer from serious methodological and quality control short-comings. Causality is not always clearly demonstrated, and broader conclusions are often drawn that can not be justified by the available evidence. This problem could be solved by greater reliance on independent sources of evaluation, which can be a challenging, if not threatening, prospect to USAID managers.

Overall, however, this paper has sought to demonstrate that, far from being the efforts of "white-coated international mad scientists," U.S. democracy and governance assistance efforts in Benin have avoided doing harm and some, in fact, have had a positive impact. The level of impact can best be described as supportive rather than leading the process of democratic development. But that is the way it should be, given the need for the impetus and primary responsibility for democratic development should come from within, rather than being externally mandated.

Recommendations

It is not possible, of course, to make definitive across-the-board judgements about the effectiveness of USAID democracy promotion activities based simply upon one case study. By combining this with the emerging literature on the subject, however, hopefully in the future some patterns can emerge and conclusions begin to be drawn. In addition, it is possible to suggest a

number of salient issues for further consideration emerging from the Beninese case that may have wider validity.

Assistance has to be sustained in order to be credible. Longer-term efforts, even if they are periodic in nature, such as election monitoring, provide the opportunity to “drive home” information and experience that does not appear to be as well absorbed as that provided in a one-off style training experience. Relatedly, and especially given resource scarcity, it is important to develop activities that reinforce previous or ongoing programs and reforms.

Civil society appears to be a relatively successful area of assistance, despite some critiques which note that it risks becoming donor-driven and is often representative only of a small elite sector of the population.⁴⁵ It is useful to encourage NGO involvement in lobbying for policy reform—double effect in advocacy and in substantive involvement.

Sub-sectoral choices, timing, and sequence are crucial. Sub-sectoral choices can be extremely important. Some types of programming work better than others, and some important areas need further focus. These include increased support to augment African capacity to assess public opinion in order to strengthen citizen’s participation in and accountability. A fresh look should also be taken at ways that political party development can be assisted. These issues are, of course, highly sensitive and delicate.

⁴⁵ See for example Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

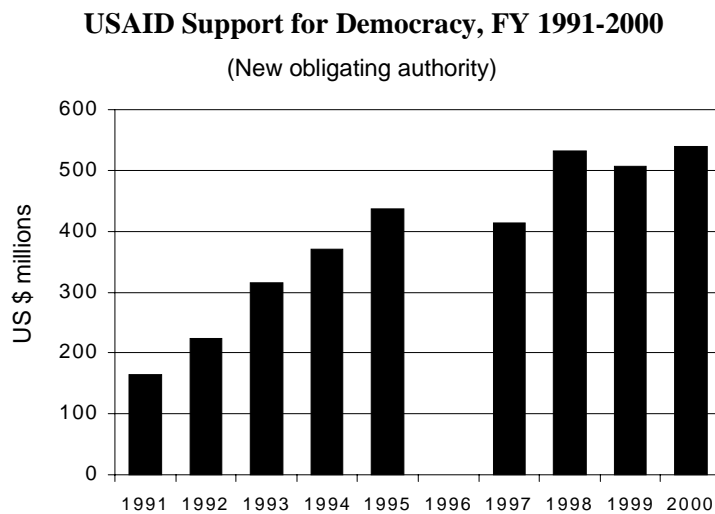
Promote cross-cutting linkages. This can be done both by intra-USAID program coordination, and more broadly, by encouraging International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other donors to further embrace the inter-related nature of economic and political development. There has been progress on this issue, particularly during President Wolfensohn's tenure at the World Bank, but more can be done to have donors integrate political development issues more fully into their development approaches. It is clear that the effectiveness of institutions of governance, such as the legislature and municipal government, is integral to the success of democratization processes.

In reality, there is no dividing line between where economic reform stops and political reform begins. To cite one example, the World Bank and the African Development Bank could increase and broaden projects designed to strengthen legislative functioning. These activities could be increasingly mainstreamed into country plans. Project activities could focus not only on current areas of focus such as financial accountability and legal/judicial reform, but include legislative-civil society outreach, constituent services, support for infrastructure, legislative-executive relations, and overall legislative functioning and procedures. Furthermore, IFI activities could go even further and recognize that other ostensibly political exercises, such as elections, have direct positive or negative effects on countries economies, depending on how legitimate they are.

USAID Needs to Reform its Evaluation Process. There needs to be greater independence in the evaluation process, and its time-line should be lengthened to capture programmatic impact

after the program has ended. This would lead to heightened credibility and weight of the evaluation process.

Figure 1: USAID Support for Democracy, FY 1991-2000⁴⁶

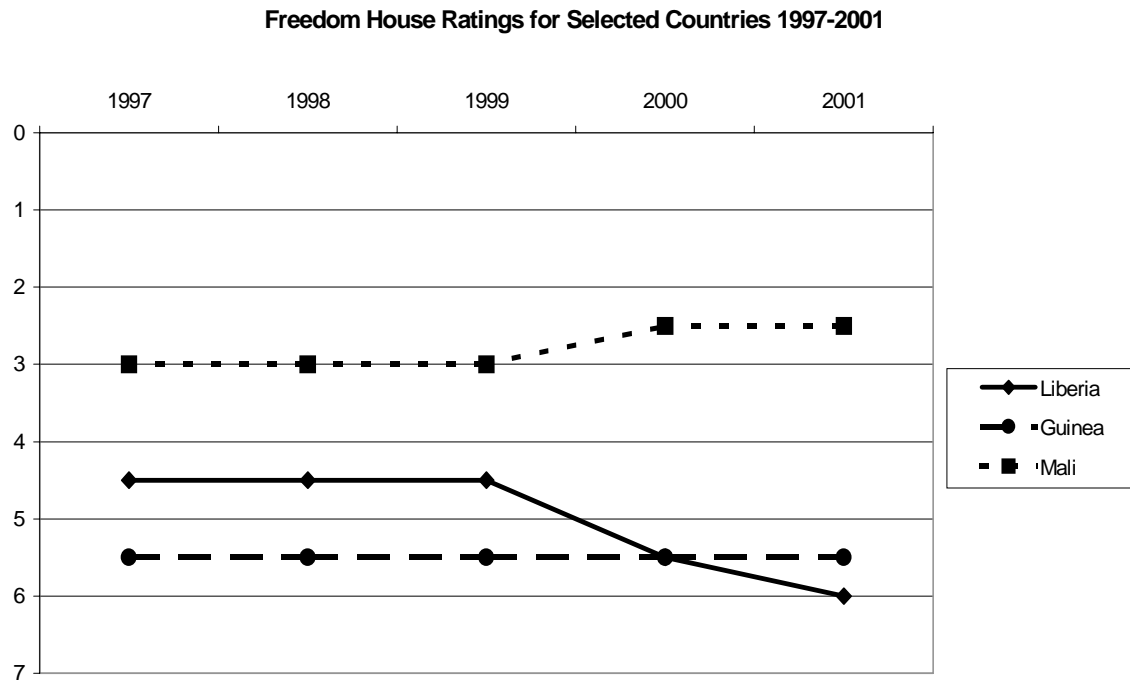


Note: data for FY 1996 are not available

Source: Data provided by the Management Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development, 2001.

⁴⁶ Harry Blair, “Research and Practice in Democratization: Cross-Fertilization or Cross-Purposes?” in *Democratic Institution Performance*, ed. Edward R. McMahon and Thomas A.P. Sinclair (Westport, CN: Praegar, 2002).

Figure 2: Freedom House Ratings for Selected Countries 1997-2001



**Figure 3: USAID Democracy/Governance Assistance for Selected Countries
1997-2001**

(in million of dollars)

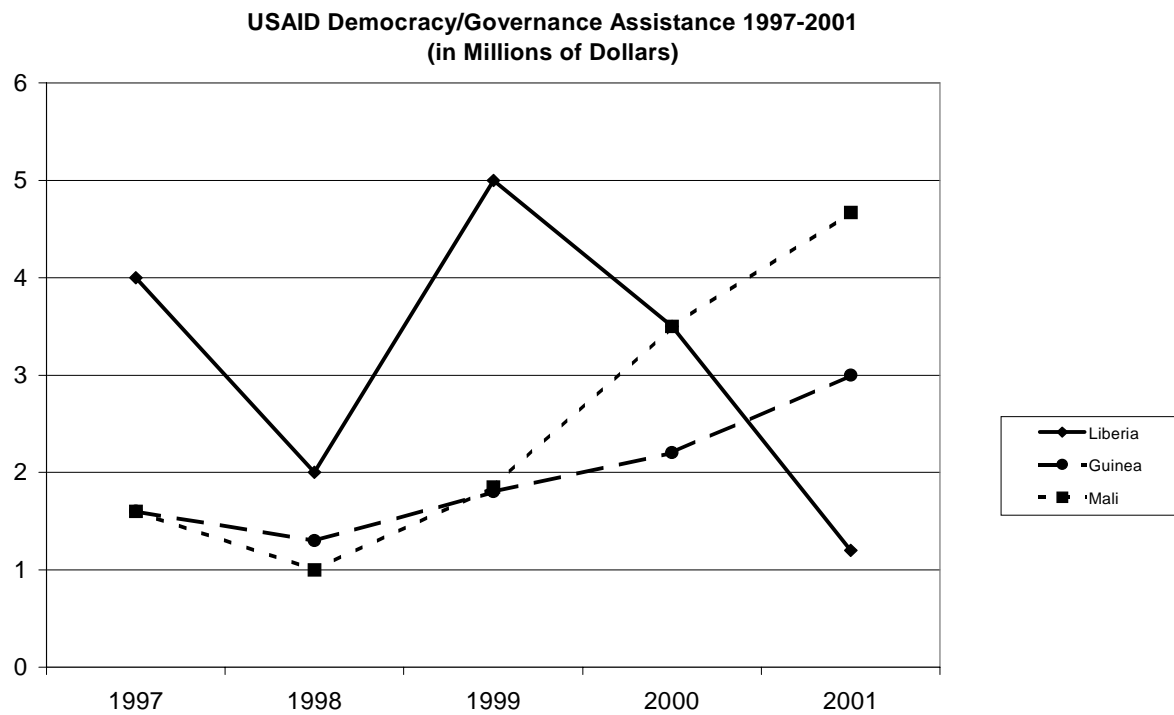


Table 1: Partial List of Democratic Development Programs Funded by the U.S. Government in Recent Years in Benin

Programs	Year Initiated
International observation mission to Presidential elections	1991
West African political party and civic organization election observer training	1991
Grassroots political party training program	1993 to 1995
Continuous series of exchanges	Continuous
Pre-legislative election assessment mission	1995
Support for election lessons learned assessment by Beninese NGOs	1995
Pre-Presidential election assessment	1996
International and Beninese observers to Presidential elections	1996
Provision of commodities to Presidential elections	1996
Parliamentary needs assessment	1998
Civil society development programs, both to support infrastructure and to foster input into public policy dialogue	Continuous
Parliamentary Training and Support	2000

Source: USAID Africa Bureau.

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